

**WOODSTOCK PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Wednesday, June 2, 2021**

**7:30PM**

**ZOOM MEETING**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Ben Jervey, Susan Boston, Sara Stadler, Mary Margaret Sloan, Susan Silberberg**

**MEMBERS ABSENT: Sam Segal**

**OTHERS PRESENT: Neal Leitner**

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**III. Old Business**

**A. Accessory on Farm Business (AOFB)/ Act 143 update**

Neal Leitner updated that on the town side an attorney was met with. The TDRV is drafting a decision and approval with conditions they are creating and the legal counsel is making the decision to make it legally sound for act 143 so if or when it gets appealed it is something they can standby. The TDRB is at the point where they believe they can condition it to be an AOFB, at the same time the applicant applied to act 250 on May 17 so there will be a site visit on the farm and at the barn on June 15 at 10 AM and it will be followed by in person meeting at the Townhall. Neal stated he is getting interest from even Pomfret residents. Sally Miller said to all commissioners who have not been to an Act 250 meeting they should attend to see what it is like and mentioned as a planning commission they are a statutory party.

Sally Miller asked Neal if the TDRB is comfortable that they will be able to duplicate the AOFB process in future applicant cases. Neal stated he believes it will as what has taken a while is setting up a process in which they can review future AOFB applications and now that they have the process with help from legal counsel, they can apply the process and the decision-making tree to future AOFB applications. So, while conditions will vary depending on application process, the checklist will be similar. Neal says this has helped get a better understanding of Act 143 and has helped streamline the process for future applicants. Neal also said for instance Hartland Hill Road will have the same decision process applied and will most likely have a different outcome with the same application measures applied to it.

Sally Miller asked if there is anything the commission needs to be doing in terms of any zoning regulation changes, to help make the process easier or to clarify. Neal said at this point no, and said one question asked to legal counsel was do we have the legal right within Act 143 to place conditions for a proposed on farm business down to what is accessory and legal counsel's interpretation of act 143 is that it gives you the ability to do that, your zoning regulations don't have to explicitly say it, or state it in zoning regulations to be able to make a condition her an application. So given that, it may not be necessary to have to go in and fine-tune it at this time.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **A. Village Neighborhood Analysis**

Sally Miller asked if people were able to access the spreadsheet she provided and asked if anyone has worked on it or had thoughts about how to proceed, as there is a lot of information.

Benjamin Jervey noted he scrolled through it and was quickly overwhelmed. Sally said that there are 500 residential properties in the village, she pulled out commercial and left in ones with potential for a residential unit like downtown buildings or some other buildings along Pleasant Street that are primarily commercial but might also have residential. Sally said that she also hyperlinked properties and residences with multiple units, she said she noticed properties with the same parcel ID for a different suffix so it is not easily searched. Sally noted she did not realize there were that many properties in the village, and whether they want to focus on one area first and do they want to look at whether it's High Street or Mountain Avenue or central commercial to weed down the 500 number to further analyze.

Susan Silberberg said her first question having glanced through it is that every assessor's office has their own system for numbering, and it may be good to get clarification from the assessor on what the suffixes stand for and she asked if the properties are linked to a GIS shaped file yet. Neal said no, they are not yet linked, he has been working with Trina in the listers office and she has been working on digitization process and working with NEMRC, and it seems like they are not too far off.

Neal said regarding the suffixes, the listers clump multiple properties owned by one person that are neighboring or adjoining, so you only get one listers parcel ID whereas the zoning office every parcel has its own ID so 001 or 002 is a subdivision, he then said the condo suffixes are usually their unit numbers. Sally said while there is a certain level of information you get from the grand list there is also information you gather from talking to people.

Susan Silberberg said the values looked low to her while they are building not land they still seem very well and asked what Woodstock's policy is on assessing. Sally did say if assessments are not up-to-date and accurate the town can be penalized and ask Neal when the last appraisal was, he replied 2016. Neal said that the town would like to avoid a town wide reappraisal but because the sale prices right now are so much higher than the assessed value once they hit a certain level off of the appraised amount, the state triggers a required townwide re-appraisal.

Sally said she thought they got penalized when they were even 5% off, she thinks there are penalty points that begin earlier but she doesn't think the commission needs to bother themselves with that.

Sally asked for suggestions on the neighborhood analysis. Susan Silberberg set a depends on what the goals are, but to maybe start with one particular feature like there was a discussion about side yards front yards being larger than they need to be in areas or thinking about affordable housing the commission might look at properties in that way, or maybe take an area and assess it completely just to see what info comes bubbling up, then from that learn from it and decide what to do next.

Sally Miller agrees, and she asked what area would be best to look at. Susan Silberberg suggested if they were vacant lot somewhere or properties in disrepair might be an area to think about, as there may be opportunities there. Benjamin agreed and mentioned that some real estate apps provide lot lines on the app and maybe use that to look and see areas of opportunity. Sara Stadler asked if the planning commission was working with the housing committee as well on this as they are sort of doing something similar.

Neal suggested Atwood, Charles Street, and the intersection of Lincoln Street, which has vacant lots, and is an underdeveloped area where there is a lot happening currently with re-development. Leitner said looking at these streets, the vacant lots and the fact that it's within the village and walkable would be a good start. Sally suggested Hartland Hill to Stanton Street, and then use Vermont GIS to make a map. Neal will get a Map of the area. The planning commission will use this to look at and work from.

Susan Silberberg stated it may be helpful to go back to Mike Miller and ask about their methodology as he noticed a vista number on the booklet he provided them.

A representative from the Vermont standard asked if the study will be looking at what changes are taking place in these areas or what a comprehensive of the study of the neighborhoods is.

Sally never replied that the planning commission had a presentation from Mike Miller who did a neighborhood study and what they discovered is a lot of their zoning in Montpelier did not correspond with what was actually happening. So the city of Montpelier used it as a way to look at neighborhoods and say how can we make this fit in more so that our zoning really reflects what is on the ground and then you can move forward and decide how to allow different types of ways to increase and encourage new housing units to be built in the village and what are the potential issues of changing the zoning but the real purpose is to understand what is there. Susan Silberberg Noted that with current regulations certain things in town can't be replicated and look at the zoning match what's on the ground and what they love and if it doesn't that is a problem then do we want to make sure the zoning will allow us to have the same look when new things are built.

Sally said no changes are being made at this point, this is just to start to look and understand, and that this area is diverse enough to look at and possibly learn something.

The representative from Vermont standard then asked any idea how long the study will take?

Sally said this is the first time the planning commission has talked about a specific area and this is very preliminary. Sally asked Neal to get a map so the planning commission can start looking at parcel ids and get going on it. Neal said he can also use Lister data for units per parcel, get square foot per parcel, and get the zones which that might help as well. Sally asked if it is all residential or if it's mixed there. Neal replied there is a little mix.

## **B. Bed & Breakfast Employee Regulation**

Neal Leitner said Susan Ford brought this up to him and says in The regulation bed-and-breakfast cannot have more than one employee and it was her understanding that would be removed and this goes back a couple of years.

Sally Miller said she did not remember accurately enough to say what the decision had been and suggested looking it up in the past minutes.

Neal said she asked for the one employee maximum to be removed from the definition. Mary Margaret Sloan is wondering how one a full-time employee is defined. Neal said he will look into the past minutes.

## **C. Vermont Public Utility Commission Notification to Planning Commission**

Sally Miller asked Neal Lightner to clarify the planning commission view on the solar array because she didn't think the commission had any say on it but there are other issues coming up on this particular solar array being in a sensitive area.

Neal said it's in a special flood hazard area apparently PUC is not exempt from not getting a permit from it, so Leitner spoke with Two Rivers about it and also concurred if it is in a flood zone the planning commission does have some space to make comments and the PUC will consider the comments.

Neal also noticed that there was not a notice sent to John Berger Campbell the state floodplain manager, and Neal noted on the town side he always sends things to him for review and comments so he thinks it would be worthwhile to send him this as well. Neal noted the application didn't specifically mention the special flood zone area either especially for ground mount and solar.

Sally Miller agrees the screening is minimal and asked what the planning commission needs to do now. Sally said she would like to do a site visit and asked if it's next to the Holland property and if so what are his thoughts. Neal said he would ask John Holland tomorrow on his call but knows the Meyerhoff's have been at all meetings.

Benjamin Jervey asked where the Meyerhoff's dwelling is. Neal said east and up the hill.

Sally said her concern is that it is in your face, in the sense that there is not a lot of screaming. Then noted it is a fixed array with 176 modules. Sally says we want to encourage solar, but what does it do to the neighborhood. Been noted this is a 58 kW system, and said he has a 9.5 kW system on his house and that's considered big and they sell power back to Green Mountain Power. He noted it is much closer to the neighbor's house then the applicants house.

Sally said she would like time to think about this and decide if it's going to detract from the neighborhood. Neal said due to its physical location it would be right in your face without screening. Neal will send this out to John Broker-Campbell for a comment, and reach out to the neighbors, and will put back on next month's agenda.

**V. Other Business**

**VI. Adjournment Meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM**